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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR
SUBJECT Comments on Research in Astronomy and Geodesy/
Quality of Optical Equipment

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1. [redacted] the first three issues of a new USSR periodical devoted to abstracts of scientific literature in the field of astronomy. Title: Referativny Zhurnal - Astronomiya. The three issues contain 500 abstracts each, 1,600 in all, covering the whole world. It is the best and most ambitious journal in the field and there is nothing remotely like it in the western world. It covers an amazing volume of literature, including some very obscure US papers, which indicates a very aggressive and thorough publications procurement program. Most significant of all is the enormous amount of scientifically trained manpower which must be available to prepare the abstracts for publication. In the US we simply would not have enough trained people to use on such a project. Presumably there are similar abstracting services for other fields of science, which makes the effort seem all the more prodigious.

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2. Another publication [redacted] is a paper bound book of 150-200 pages on the subject of radio astronomy by a young man named Shklovsky who has become known during the last few years as one of the most outstanding astrophysicists in the USSR. It is a semi-popular account showing a very good understanding of the theory of radio astronomy, including some of the author's own ideas, but the curious thing about it is that it makes no references whatever to observations in the USSR. It is well illustrated, but all photos are from US, UK, or Australian journals. It is inconceivable that a scientist with Shklovsky's technical competence and sound knowledge of theory has not set up a radar antenna in his own backyard, yet he makes no mention of it and writes as if the only available data on the subject has come from abroad. The only possible explanation is that this is a case of deliberate suppression of information.
3. Another recent book is the proceedings of a May 1952 symposium devoted to problems of cosmogony. There are a large number of contributions by astronomers, physicists and philosophers, mostly devoted to the theories of VA Ambartsumyan, the leading astrophysicist of the USSR. If the astronomy portions are a fair indication, most of it is pretty sound. It includes, however, the usual attacks on foreign, particularly US, scientists, and names Gamon, Struve, and others as "characteristic of that group

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of bourgeois physicists who occupy themselves with the direct perversion of science." They still make these attacks [] yet they [] try to act like friends at international meetings.

4. The USSR has always been strong in the field of geodesy, and research in that subject was administered by the military even in pre-revolutionary times. Although the USSR has cooperated with the western world in latitude observations through a Commission of the International Astronomical Union, there is reason to believe that the Soviets have built up their observation stations for latitude variation research to a far greater extent than is being done in the US. Poltava Observatory in the Ukraine has been the center of this activity and has always been a training center for specialists in geodesy.
5. Some comparative photographs in the April 1954 issue of Sky and Telescope, pp 182-183, give graphic testimony to the inferiority of Soviet optical instruments used in photographing the stars. Although the article illustrated deals with an entirely different subject, the use of US and USSR photographs of identical portions of the sky reproduced side by side, shows that Soviet astronomers are unable to get with their equipment the sharp definition obtained by US astronomical photography.

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